

THE CEA CRITIC

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January, 1955

The Liberal Arts - Where Do They And Should They Stand?

(An Address Before the 1953 College English Association Institute at The Corning Glass Center, Corning, New York, October 15, 1953.)

Suppose a business corporation with limited resources set out to manufacture all products necessary to man. That corporation would certainly be branded as a foolish, ridiculous venture with little chance of survival. And yet we have numerous examples of small liberal arts colleges with very limited resources indeed which attempt to give to their clients all knowledge and experience known to man. One may select at random almost any college catalogue and find proof for this statement in the section on goals and aims of the college and then find confirmation in the wide, scattered listing of courses. Something must be there for any individual regardless of the strange twists in his pattern of interests.

I have no intention of being decisive of educational institutions. As part of society we have created them. We have forcefully exerted our mass pressure on their programs and their survival in many instances has been fashioned by our demands. At the same time, institutions have become painfully public relations conscious and leadership is lost in the desire to please the public, to keep them satisfied, to keep enrollment ever climbing as if size were an impressive mark of progress. This ingratiating behavior on the part of institutions of higher learning has made them most susceptible to the demands of the public which have been many, mad and miscellaneous. It may be trite, but none the less true, to say that we have asked our schools to be all things to all men. Many parents insist that a liberal arts education result in a higher earning capacity. Why send my child to college if he is not trained to move much more successfully than he otherwise would in the world of employment? Students adopt this attitude and nervously attempt to fit their immature interests and abilities into some skill that will "pay off." Such demands have influenced greatly the current history of liberal arts education. Training for vocations has been sandwiched into the old-

er, established curriculum. Professional education is emphasized before the student has gained an understanding and familiarity with his cultural heritage.

Furthermore, many in society insist that educational institutions take as their major responsibility the solution of social problems. Social reform should result from "proper" education, and students should be made to feel this burden as well as know how to approach the problems of citizenship. Courses such as those in automobile driving and in how to bank your money have been added to the college curriculum. These examples may appear ludicrous, but the deeper principle involved is a serious and often noble one. Most thinking men analyze the role of education in society and believe that by application of their particular doctrine in the schools the younger generation will be better equipped to mend the world's ills and create the model state. All of us, of course, place some such hopes on the future citizen, but is it the first responsibility of our colleges to offer courses geared to cure specific problems of community life?

To be sure, educational institutions have been creators in the great expansion in knowledge; they have also been the recipients of this expansion in more confused programs. With the exceptions perhaps of theology and philosophy, all fields of learning have increased in scope and quantity of facts. Science and the age of discovery have confronted the individual with the impossibility of encompassing all knowledge even in one field. Hence, we easily narrow our path, follow our specialty, and refer to anything outside this road as "out of our line." It seems to be the only way a man can retain some security and self-confidence in the face of overwhelming odds. In the process universities have divided and subdivided knowledge, set up more and more departments each with its group of experts unintelligible to the expert in the department next door. With this conceptual and administrative change in our institutions of higher learning, the troublesome question has

become which departments belong in the liberal arts—not what body of knowledge or understanding has its logical home in the liberal arts.

From this recognition of chaos in educational aims and factors affecting a liberal education we can not proceed without due recognition of the effects of mass education and the rapidity with which hordes of human beings have descended upon schools and colleges. Ortega y Gasset has summarized the present dilemma thus: "In the schools, which were such a source of pride to the last century, it has been impossible to educate them. They have been given tools for an intenser form of existence, but no feeling for their great his-

toric duties; they have been hurriedly inoculated with the pride and power of modern instruments, but not with their spirit. Hence they will have nothing to do with their spirit, and the new generations are getting ready to take over command of the world as if the world were a paradise without trace of former footsteps, without traditional and highly complex problems."

Certainly we are aware of this trend and many voices join in Ortega's lament. We have awakened and found the effects of mass education, of the tremendous accumulation of knowledge of the demands that education play the role of so-

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HAVE WE PROOF?

The CEA has aroused interest in cooperation between English and business. Have you proof now that business is giving more scholarships and other types of financial aid to students in liberal arts? The employers have not changed their language in most of their publicity addressed to employment officials whom I know. I am judging by announcements on bulletin boards addressed to seniors.

The men who are in charge of employment need to be re-educated concerning offerings in liberal arts and just what importance is to be attached to the "major." They call for a "major" in the field in which the employees will work when actually the job makes no demands concerning what was learned in the major subject.

Government announcements in particular refer again and again to majors in business or in the social sciences when the jobs mentioned do not call for skills and types of information unlike those possessed by liberal arts graduates majoring in other fields.

Autrey Nell Wiley
Texas State College for Women

Straws in the Wind

1. Dollars and Ideas

When the U. S. Steel Foundation last week parceled out \$700,000 in initial grants—mostly to liberal arts colleges—Chairman Benjamin F. Fairless made it clear that there were no restrictions. He said: "The Foundation has no desire to share in purely educational decisions or to become involved in the customary provinces of colleges and universities."

Good for him, we say. Neither U. S. Steel nor any other corporation should feel entitled to dictate to an educational institution because of a money contribution. But we really don't want to see a complete divorce of business and edu-

cation except for such transfers of funds. Instead, we believe it is beneficial to have educators and businessmen get better acquainted.

For example, when the College English Assn. Institute met at Michigan State College, several hundred business and education representatives spent two days exploring ways of reducing the gap between industry and the liberal arts. Much was accomplished. But it will take many more meetings of the same type to dispel false notions each group has long had about the other.

(Business Week, July 24, 1954)
2. See, in the Dec. CEA Critic,
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THE CEA CRITIC

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RULES BY WHICH A GREAT SUBJECT MAY BE REDUCED TO A SMALL ONE

(with apologies to Benjamin
Franklin)

It is true these rules represent
counsel of perfection. But how
many have even attempted to fol-
low them? Full success will re-
ward only those who dedicate
themselves completely, but the
most modest efforts will succeed
surprisingly.

1. Be rigorous, critical, exclusive.
Literature is an art.

2. Concentrate on the historical
approach. Literature exists in his-
tory.

3. Be thoroughly philological.
Literature is created in the form
of language.

4. Be psychological. Literature is
surely a product of the human
mind.

5. Be biographical. Literature is
written by individual men and
women.

6. Be sociological. Literature
comes from society.

7. Be philosophical and moral-

istic. Literature is concerned with
right and wrong actions. If at the
same time you can convey the im-
pression that your students are
immoral cubs, so much the better.

8. Whatever your approach, be
absolute, unvarying, uncontingent.
Ignore the form, the period, the
level of the course.

9. If you are a creative writer,
stress the fact constantly. Single
out the students who "create" and
ignore the rest. Let your classes
know that you are an alienated
artist. They will soon be alienated,
too.

10. Speak plainly about your
colleagues. Whenever the oppor-
tunity presents itself, be blunt
about their age, sex, taste, gradu-
ate training.

11. Remember that your person-
ality has no place in the class-
room, although it should be dis-
played in all its infinite variety in
the committee room and the fac-
ulty meeting. A cool impersonality
will quickly communicate itself to
your students.

12. Avoid enthusiasm, which de-
stroys balance and integrity. Ex-
pand your treatment of authors
and works that are beyond your
sympathy. Search out the defects
in those you admire. Concentrate
on the minor figures, especially in
elementary courses.

13. Keep the text pure by using
textbooks free of explanatory
notes. Insist sternly that any stu-
dent is physically able to look up
allusions in Migne's *Patrologia* or
Schick's *Corpus Hamleticum*.

14. Devote time mainly to Eng-
lish majors. Brush off unwelcome
interruptions by general students
with a brusque, "Oh, that's just
philosophy!" or "That's science,
but this is a class in literature."
Such conduct will help your stu-
dents to see you in perspective.

15. Let the students make up
their own reading-lists and pro-
grams. Point out that you believe
in democracy and progressive edu-
cation.

16. Do not let the students, or
even the wrong kind of teachers,
have any voice in the program. Be
rigidly prescriptive toward all.
Point out clearly that you believe
in discipline and tradition. Ignore
inconsistency. *Toujours l'attaque*.

17. Do not object to large class-
es. Follow the rules and large
classes will be only a temporary
phenomenon.

18. Remember that humor is out
of place in the literature class.
Whenever you cannot cut the
comedy right out of the curricu-
lum, pass over it quickly.

Application of these rules will
result at once in a reduction in
the number of majors.

Edward Fless
Brooklyn College

Expostulation . . .

Some students who went into
business, even majors in business
administration, are leaving now
for teaching. They do not like
business. We know that many who
major in liberal arts will never go
into business.

Are we in CEA neglecting the
main field in which our graduates
find employment—teaching? Edu-
cationists are working fast while
we are apparently diverted from
the central problem in our field.
Somehow, what our fine support-
ers in business think should be
passed on to the educationists.

Can you devise ways to save
high schools and colleges from the
pedagogical errors now suffered in
elementary education?

Talk about improving teaching
in college is now opening the way

1. We have been trying to pass
on to the educationists what our
supporters in business think should
be passed on to them. Executive
officers of the professional organi-
zations of educators are on our
CEA mailing list, as are the edi-
tors of their publications. They
have been receiving copies of all
the available material emanating
from our Institute conferences.
They have been invited to our con-
ferences and some of them have
come. Their editors have requested
articles on The CEA Institute ac-
tivities, and these are in process.

In the program for the 1955
CEA Institute conference, to be
held April 5-7 at GE and Union
College, Schenectady, New York,
we are providing opportunity to
discuss the very issues Dr. Wiley
raises, and are inviting both schol-
ars and educators to join people
from industry in these talks.

Incidentally, The CEA Institute
activities are self-supporting. They
do not draw on the regular CEA
income. They have to be on their
own.

2. The CEA itself does not dis-
count scholarship. Many of its
members are themselves produc-
tive, even distinguished, scholars.
What the CEA discounts is dead,
irrelevant, and trivial scholarship.
It wants creative, relevant, and
large-spirited scholarship. It wants
the scholar to assume active re-
sponsibility for education, as well
as for research. It wants the Ph. D.
curriculum to give due attention
to the graduate student not only
as "researcher", but as potential
teacher. In short, The CEA wants
precisely what Dr. Wiley wants
and herself so admirably exempli-
fies: the socially, culturally, re-
sponsible scholar-teacher, who
guarantees, for our generation, the
fresh vitality of English studies
as a humanity.

for just as poor methodology
as has entered into the training
of elementary and some high
school teachers. Educationists in-
vade at their first opportunity, and
some of our English professors
hold not Ph. D.'s but D. Ed.'s. Any
such weakening in our own field
will affect our future program.

The fault is not in the Ph. D.
training; it is in the person who
takes the Ph. D. and who never
realizes that he must reach other
minds when he teaches. Anyone
who attempts to hand out to his
students just what he got from a
graduate professor is not a good
teacher anywhere. I do not like to
see the CEA discounting scholar-
ship and the Ph. D. Do you?

Autry Nell Wiley
Texas State College for Women

. . . and Reply

3. Our own CEA membership is
sharply divided about the educa-
tionists. There is agreement that
something is sadly out of joint in
American education at all levels,
and that the educationists share
responsibility. But beyond this our
CEA members seem to move in di-
vergent directions. Some say that
we ourselves are to blame because
of our own shortcomings as teach-
ers and by our own irresponsibility
in neglecting, in favor of academic
hobbies and disinterested scholar-
ship, our duties to American edu-
cation. Some say we are to blame
for having allowed the education-
ists to move into vacua that we
ourselves should have been the
first to fill. Some recommend that
we now attempt statesmanlike
compromise and cooperation with
the educationists. Others demand
total war.

In recent issues of The CEA
Critic, we have given the varied
attitudes a chance. In view of Dr.
Wiley's comments, it is interesting
to find, in our mail, this complaint
from the editor of one of our lead-
ing educational publications: that
we have been biased and unfair in
our treatment of the professional
"educator."

The Critic would welcome fur-
ther discussion. In the words of
Bob Fitzhugh: Don't stifle the
urge to write the editor.

4. Far from being diverted from
the central problem of our field,
The CEA has been giving sus-
tained attention to it. A perusal
of the articles in the CEA Critic
for the past three years will show
this. The 1954 annual CEA meet-
ing program focussed sharply upon
the main field where our graduates
find employment — teaching.

5. To Prof. Wiley: our heartfelt
thanks.

M. H.

That All Important, Impossible Question

"Parry," said Olden stubbornly. "Wood," I repeated patiently. Olden's face was red; I was cool and resolved.

"But Parry's poem is ten times more effective!" he shouted.

I put my finger on the first stanza of Wood's poem. "Here's richness of language, fresh observation, a moving impression of life." But I could not convince my colleague, and that is why the first prize for The Best Student Poem of the Year was shared by both Parry and Wood — leaving them happy, no doubt, but leaving Olden and me wretched because a very poor poem had been honored. Only Olden thought the poor poem was Wood's, and I thought it was Parry's.

Why could we not agree? Both of us are men of long years of reading poetry; both of us write poetry; both of us have published critical accounts of poets; both of us have a genuine zest for poetry. And yet — place some student poems before us, and Olden thinks Parry's is admirable (I think it stinks — Kiplingesque doggerel of the flattest sort) while I think Wood's a superb piece (Olden thinks it stinks — vacuous and adleptated).

What Is the Standard?

And so over a cup of tea in the Student Union Building, while the clamor from the jukebox swirls about the room, I meditate the all-important, impossible, yet persistent question: is there no objective standard by which one may judge a work of art? Is judgment only and always personal, subjective,

submissive to no enduring criteria, receptive to no agreed standards? Are his taste and their taste and her taste and my taste all equally right, equally wrong, equally meaningless?

I thought of the Greeks. From their artists they learned the beauty of form, and from that beauty constructed a criterion based on balance, proportion, harmonious equilibrium. Were they wrong? The barbaric yawp of Whitman, the savagery of Shakespeare, the full-bellied gusto of Rabelais, such works seemed to prove that proportion and balance and serenity, admirable though they may be, are in themselves lopsided standards by which to estimate a work.

Well then, could one speak of luxuriousness of language, vitality of characters, such things as the standard by which to assay a worthy literary work? No sooner the question, than the iconoclastic answer. *South Wind* and *The Way of All Flesh* notoriously lack character development; the second book is famously dry in its language: yet only the owl and sap-less would deny these books an accolade.

Fiddling with my cup of tea, I pursued the argument. Surely we could at least accept the theory of Matthew Arnold: the man who reads deeply, richly, who dwells at length with the acknowledged masterpieces of past times, creates within him a standard of comparison by which to test the validity of a new and unfamiliar work. The deeply read—he is the arbiter.

How Can the Teacher Judge?

Sudden, full flushed like an overblown rose, there swam into my memory the department meeting a week or so before. Somehow, waiting for a delayed staff member, we began discussing the book *From Here to Eternity* — half a dozen and more of us deeply read, richly read pedagogs. Confusion worse confounded. For here was one man, passionate with belief, denouncing the book as foul, and, what's more, badly constructed; here another, white hot with anger, denouncing the denouncer and acclaiming the book as a masterpiece; here another murmuring qualifications of one sort; here another, murmuring qualifications of a different sort; yet here another intoning that only time would tell.

Is there no certainty, no certainty at all in this whirl of a world then? Perhaps, I thought, above the jukebox clamor, perhaps it is best that taste is always in flux, that no standards are

permanent or invulnerable, that learned professors disagree and will disagree to the end of time, even upon the merit of objects within their own learned field. Perhaps education, considered justly, includes our students knowing that no taste is fixed and stable, no criteria invulnerable, no judgment unassailable, no laws and ukases exist in art. Perhaps if we return to believe that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, that man is the measure of all things, that all things break, that life is flux, we shall do our students more good than we contemplate.

Yet there is something unsatisfactory in this too. Doggone it, if there are no standards of artistic judgment, then just what braggart or blackguard is a teacher who stands before his classes and judges? For man must judge, even if negatively: to discriminate, to form valid tastes, this is the function of an educated man. I've got myself in an unhappy situation. That damnable, unescapable, all-important, impossible question!

I went to get another cup of tea, while I worked out the answer to it.

Willis D. Jacobs

The University of New Mexico

Composition by TV

One of the most challenging tasks facing a teacher of freshman writing is proper motivation. In an attempt to meet this challenge, Michigan State College has developed an experimental television program entitled "A Course in Clear Writing." The ten-week course, offered winter quarter, 1955, is aimed primarily at high school students who intend to enter college. It stresses the positive aspects of effective expression: being specific, using personal experiences, and observing carefully.

A syllabus, mailed to all who enroll, includes an initial diagnostic test and a final achievement test, modeled on representative entrance tests at Big Ten universities and Michigan colleges.

Dr. William D. Baker, of the Department of Communication Skills, is teaching the course, assisted by "guests" from the same department. They discuss such topics as using the dictionary, avoiding clichés, theme revision, grading themes, and writing essay exams.

A college remedial writing section, watching the program in a classroom, is matched on attitude and achievement tests with a section which does not watch the program. Experiments at the high school level also will be conducted.

January Critic Supplement
A SAMLA Bulletin Reprint
National CEA Institute conferences are complex and many-sided events. They bring together spokesmen—most of them energetic and articulate—from varied sectors of American educational, business, and social life. Impressions of these conferences are correspondingly varied; and conference reports by different participants show these divergences.

The January Critic supplement, a SAMLA Bulletin reprint (May, 1954), "Big Business and the Humanities", by George F. Horner, of the University of North Carolina, covers ground already treated by others. Yet it does so from a distinctive point of view, and hence should be of particular interest to Critic readers trying to gauge, from the perspective of time, the total significance of our CEA Institute efforts for us as college teachers.

Further, this supplement illustrates how national CEAI discussions provide food for thought in regional areas of our professional activity, and reach an enlarged audience among professors of other humanities than English and its allied studies.

A valuable feature of Prof. Horner's "Big Business and the Humanities" is the urbanely thoughtful, specific, and eloquent charge that the author, in the last section of his comprehensive paper, lays upon us professors of the humanities. This section begins at the bottom of page 2, with the sentence: "So speaks big business; how do we professed proponents of the humanities reply?"

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300 pp. • 7" x 9-3/4" • Jan. 1955

PRENTICE-HALL, INC. N. Y. 11

Linguistics And The Teaching Of English

(This is the first in a series of selections from the papers on linguistics presented at the 1951 annual CEA meeting in Detroit. Subsequent Critics will contain other papers in the series.)

I. What Is Linguistic Science?

We can all agree that a science is a branch of knowledge or study dealing with a body of fact, systematically arranged and showing the operation of general laws. Consequently, we may describe linguistic science as dealing with a body of fact or collection of data about language, duly systematized, and presumably pointing to some conclusions capable of general application — or at least for each of the languages so studied.

Linguistics is one of the younger sciences. It is not more than 125 years old. Its emergence as a science is usually dated from 1825, the period at which Grimm, Rask, and Bopp were active. Like all sciences it has shifted its focus and direction from time to time.

Historical Survey

Grimm, Rask, and Bopp were chiefly interested in determining relationships among the various languages. Later in the nineteenth century with the work of Schleicher and Paul, principles for the study of the historical development of languages were refined and clarified. Early in the twentieth century there followed a period of collecting data about the various languages on a grander scale than had ever before been attempted. The *Oxford English Dictionary* and the monumental *Dictionary of Jespersen and Poutsma* on the development of English are products of this tendency.

The final phase is that of structural linguistics, which strives for a refinement of the classification of objective data concerning language. Here the work of Leonard Bloomfield has been of tremendous importance. His work with various American Indian languages impressed upon him the futility of permitting the categories of traditional Alexandrian grammar to serve as a procrustean bed to which all languages had to be trimmed. To him more than to anyone else, we owe our present tendencies toward the classification of every language in terms of its own structure.

I mention Bloomfield in particular because he so profoundly influenced the present generation of linguistic scholars in this country. Although many European linguists had the same general aim, they approached it in many different ways. One may mention in this connection the Prague school, de Saussure, Firth, Hjelmslev, and many others. There has even been a Russian school of linguistics, op-

erating within the Marxist frame.

Major Results

The result of this intense activity in the field of structural linguistics has been:

1) To create a whole new series of concepts, a new working method in establishing them, a new terminology in describing them.

2) In this country this has been accompanied by a refusal to accept as valid evidence anything outside the objective linguistic data themselves — an alignment with the behavioristic school of psychology. One consequence of this is a refusal to infer anything as to what goes on in the consciousness of the speaker of writer. Another is a refusal to explain or describe linguistic constructions or phenomena in terms of logical or pseudo-logical categories.

3) There has been a renewed tendency to obtain linguistic data directly from the speakers or writers of the language — the informant technique.

Divorce from Literature

Sadly enough, the development of linguistic studies into a full-blown and separate department of learning has resulted in divorce from literary studies. On the one hand, linguistic scholars have enough problems to keep them busy for three or four lifetimes, and on the other, men who had the conventional doctoral training of two or three decades ago, with a more or less perfunctory bow in the direction of linguistics, have not been able to keep up with the recent and rapid developments in the new science. But it is these men and the students they train who do the real work of teaching a practical command of the English language, in Freshman English courses, to half a million students each year and to some thirty millions in the high schools.

Implications for Teachers

The purpose of this series of articles will be to try to see whether these divergent streams may not again arrive at a confluence. Does this scientific approach to language have in it something of value on the practical classroom level? To put it in terms of our topic: **WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF LINGUISTIC SCIENCE FOR THE TEACHING OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE SCHOOLS?**

1) Are there such implications bearing upon the aims of instruction in the English language, writ-

ten and oral?

2) Are there such implications with respect to acceptable standards of written and oral English?

3) Does linguistic science have implications for actual classroom practices and techniques in developing language skills and habits?

These are questions of considerable moment. No country has ever embarked upon so ambitious a program of training in the native language as we in the United States. If we are to succeed in our generally accepted democratic aim of providing all our future citizens with a mastery of Standard English, we need every iota of pertinent knowledge to do the job, every bit of cooperation among linguistic scientists, psychologists, sociologists, and educators that we can manage to get. The test of our success in this task will be the amount of light we can manage to shed on the problem, not in the heat we may be capable of generating.

Albert H. Marckwardt
University of Michigan

II. The Uses of Linguistics

A "man from Mars" visiting the earth would notice that the members of the human race communicate with each other primarily (though not exclusively) by means of sets of auditory signals, which they produce with their organs of speech and perceive with their ears. In this way, they are able to transfer stimuli from one nervous system to another, and to undertake cooperative actions whose effects literally cover the globe and link together persons who have never come face to face. These systems of auditory signals are what we call language; speech and hearing are the primary activities of mankind in the linguistic field, and writing and reading are secondary activities based on speech and hearing. It is possible to study, analyze and describe the linguistic habits of human beings, utilizing the essentials of scientific procedure: objective observation, rational analysis, and concise statement of results. The science which does this is linguistics.

"Relativity" of Good English

Linguistics has taught us a great many things about language that had hitherto been unknown, or at best vaguely suspected, and has come to a number of conclusions that are sharply at variance with widespread but erroneous notions. This is true of our ideas regarding language as it is spoken at present, and also as it has been spoken in the past and as it changes in the course of time. One

of the most noteworthy conclusions that linguistics has reached is that "correctness," "good English" and the like, are at best relative, not absolute, and that all such matters are determined, not by judicial fiat nor yet by the dicta of "authorities," but by the social standing of certain groups of speakers. Often enough, our authoritarian grammars and textbooks foist upon us a set of "rules" which have little or nothing to do with the facts of language as it is actually spoken or written. Sometimes, the grammarian's prescriptions treat as universally and permanently valid, some observation which holds only for a particular group at a particular time; at other times, the grammarian sets up an artificial shibboleth which does not correspond to actual fact, but is based rather, on some rule of an alien language (most often Latin) or on pseudo-logic, or even is a pure figment of the grammarian's imagination.

The Problem of Spelling

Linguistics also helps us to arrive at a clearer realization of the relation between pronunciation and spelling, and of the fact that our alphabetic writing-system is essentially phonemic in nature, i. e. it affords representation primarily for the phonemes, or significant units of sound, of our speech. (This realization is especially important at a time when reading and spelling are being widely taught as if English words were represented in writing by separate, discrete, unanalyzable graphemes like Chinese characters.) In matters of grammatical structure, the approach of linguistic analysis is based first of all on speech, and helps us to recognize features, often fundamental features, of our language which are not represented in writing (especially in connection with stress and intonation and related phenomena).

The Problem of Change

Human language is constantly changing: neither for better nor for worse, but simply changing.

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ed. by Barzun

DeForest

MISS RAVENEL'S CON-
VERSION

ed. by Haight

RINEHART 232 MAD. AVE., NY

Students of language have been able to penetrate a certain distance into its past, at least far enough to see that popular notions of "corruption" in linguistic changes are unfounded. Sounds, forms, or syntactic constructions may and do change over the millennia, but their fitness for expressing human thought remains the same. It is a widespread notion that, if people did not speak "correctly" and did not seek to hinder change and "corruption," soon one generation would not be able to understand the next. As a matter of fact, although language changes, it changes much more slowly than other human institutions, and the members of each community—old and young—are always able to understand each other. The languages of "primitive" tribes are no different from those of "civilized" nations in this and in all other respects, no matter whether they are written down or not; the only effect that writing has on linguistic change is to sometimes induce "spelling-pronunciations," such as fore-head for forehead, and thus to interfere with the normal course of linguistic development.

Tolerance Needed

It is evident that, as the findings of linguistics become known, adjustments will have to be made both in our folk attitudes towards language and in what we teach about language in our schools. From a short-range point of view, those who are not brought up

speaking standard English will still, in order to adapt themselves to social requirements, need to learn standard usage, in school or out. They should be given the means to do so, however, not blindly and following the unfounded dicta of "authorities", but with their eyes open and basing their linguistic development on the actual facts of the situation. From a long-range point of view, it would be well if speakers of standard English would train themselves to take a more objective, relativistic and hence tolerant attitude with regard to other people's usage.

In the sphere of practical applications of linguistics, we may foresee changes in the teaching of spelling and reading in the elementary grades, and of grammatical analysis and stylistics in high school and college. It is especially to be hoped that grammar will cease to be prescriptive and will come to be descriptive, taking into account the facts of speech as underlying those of writing, and the facts of usage as underlying those of the standard language. If a sound approach can be applied to the study of grammar at the high school level, clearing out the dead wood of inaccuracies and half-truths about the English language that encumber our textbooks, it might perhaps not be too much to hope that work in English composition on the college level can again be devoted to training students primarily in effective use of the stylistic resources which our language affords.

Robert A. Hall, Jr.
Cornell University

"Linguistic Snobs" Deplored

On Nov. 13, 1954, a conference of English teachers of the state of West Virginia was conducted by the English department of W. V. State College on the theme "Better Articulation between High School and College Teaching of English." The chief speaker was Dr. Lou LaBrant, past president of the NCTE. Children who never hear English which isn't grammatical, she pointed out, may grow up to be "linguistic snobs." Such children are unable to cope with imperfect English when they meet it in later life.

She said that children used to arrive in school with little linguistic experience outside their own homes. Now they come to school with a knowledge of a wide variety of dialects through the media of radio and television. Such English enriches the child's linguistic experience.

She explained that the role played by language in life takes different forms. There is the word

As You Don't Like It

"Smithson's taste good, Like a cigarette should!" is a type of advertising all too common today. It would almost seem that there is a concerted effort on the part of advertisers and producers to obliterate the distinction between like as preposition and as as subordinate conjunction. I recently saw a greeting card, on which like was so used, and on which the sender, a conscientious person with a feeling for the niceties of English, had carefully changed like to as.

The wandering of like into regions hitherto closed to it is symptomatic. Advertisers, imprudent public speakers, and a host of others, obsessed with the desire to "reach the average man," have been, it would seem, consciously ungrammatical and consciously inelegant in their English expression. They have, I am convinced, underestimated the receptive powers of American readers and audiences. Every one knows that it is possible to talk above the heads of people. But it is likewise possible to talk down to them. The ideal, surely, is neither up nor down, but rather a reasonable and understandable level avoiding both pretentiousness and slovenliness.

What is said of matters grammatical and stylistic applies as well to matters of pronunciation. Changes are, we know, under way. But, again, why should those who can influence and persuade throw their powers in the direction of popular carelessness? I see no greater excellence in the product served if a restaurant advertises a special of "ham-n-eggs" than if it were, in decency and care, to

announce "ham and eggs." Let those who can, strive to improve rather than worsen!

The vast American public attention to television and radio is entitled to the good, at least, in English speech. Studied lapses from pronunciation, grammar, style, may seem to serve a passing advantage. But they are a sorry use of great scientific inventions if they lend themselves to a cheapening of the priceless heritage of language. Let it be English as we know it to be correct, not like we know it to be correct!

William Charles Korfmaier
Saint Louis University

HENRY JAMES

selected fiction

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spoken face to face, where gestures and intonation help explain the meaning. Then there is the "disembodied word" of the radio where differentiation of meaning is transmitted by intonation alone. There is the word with a picture of television. Next comes the written word, which can rely on no intonation or gesture; and finally, the language form most difficult for the child, writing.

The general session at which Dr. LaBrant spoke was led by Lerona E. Kemp of W. V. State College. The speaker was introduced by Ruth S. Norman of Garnet High School, Charleston, W. V. Included in the conference were panel discussions on writing, literature, speech, and drama. A special feature of the conference was the reading seminar directed by Dr. Sophia Nelson of W. V. State College.

Approximately 150 teachers attended the conference. There will be another conference in November of 1955.

THE LIBERAL ARTS (Continued From Page 1)

cial reformer and also prepare the student to earn a living at least in the present market.

Many have felt the absence of unity in purpose, the loss of a community of scholars, the vacuum where a common heritage in learning should exist. More and more we are discussing the importance of the liberal arts to an educated man. We are talking of our tradition in learning and culture, and guards are being erected against the early, highly specialized training program.

In the present conglomerate organization of courses, care is usually taken to guide the student—often through requirements—to a balanced program. The most common method followed is that of having the student select limited subject matter courses within four major groupings: English and languages, humanities, social studies, science and mathematics. In this way, the student achieves the composite program that characterizes his liberal arts education.

Another approach employed frequently is to give the student survey courses—intended to acquaint him generally with the knowledge in the major areas of learning. Courses labeled Contemporary Civilization or Western Civilization or Social Problems are counted on to give a broad surface view of the magnitude of knowledge available. Our leading universities such as Harvard, Chicago, Columbia and Minnesota, have endorsed heavily this survey method of combining facts into a meaningful whole.

Other institutions have attempted to gain this unity in the curriculum by drawing upon subject matter merely to cultivate the individual student's needs and interests. At the beginning of the college career, the student is questioned, tested, interviewed and analyzed to determine his abilities and interests. With this diagnosis as a basis, the program is then planned for and around the individual. Stephens, Bennington, and Sarah Lawrence are outstanding examples of this so-called progressive approach to course planning.

Another method adopted by St. John's and others is that of centering the curriculum on the great books as a means of transferring the heritage of the past to the new student.

We could continue describing the various, overlapping approaches being made, but the important element is that each is attempting to find a focal point for a sound liberal education.

It is sufficient to say at this time that the essence of the debate

on the liberal arts is no longer their merit or value, but rather that of organizing our vast inheritance of knowledge in order to present it in a meaningful way to young people. I am sure it is apparent that we are defining the liberal arts as that body of culture and learning which is the common heritage of each of us. We have mentioned the strong pressures contributing to the distortion of our present educational pattern and we have arrived at the point of efforts to re-unify the liberal curriculum so that it may be given as the general education to all young scholars.

As a suggestion for re-vitalizing liberal education, I should like to add to this healthy dilemma the proposition that we focus less attention on the organization of knowledge in forming the curriculum—and that instead we concentrate more upon the end products expected in a liberally educated person. With this approach the functions of a liberal education might become clearer.

As generally acknowledged, we teach the student, on the one hand, facts, events, literature, and, on the other, skills as in speaking, writing, calculating with figures, and conducting laboratory experiments. Yet all of our psychological studies in the area of learning and retention show conclusively that facts learned or specific knowledge acquired is not retained for long. Any of us can look back upon our school and college experience and verify this to be the case.

In defense of the present college education we argue that the facts and events may have been forgotten, but there is a residue. And what is the residue? Again we argue that the residue consists of having learned a way of dealing with facts—a way of thinking about them, a method of organizing them. Even though we do not remember the facts, we certainly must have acquired an understanding of the great ideas.

This type of reasoning leads to an important and obvious question that is seldom raised. Could not a liberal arts education become much more effective if it dealt directly with the great ideas rather than with fragmentary subject matter in the hope that the ideas might be retained? Suppose for example, instead of organizing the common core of a college curriculum around special subjects such as history, political science, sociology, economics, literature, basic sciences, it were organized around some of the really important ideas that have had a major impact upon the development of civilization with subject matter from these various fields

drawn upon so that the student might acquire a direct understanding of the ideas, would not a liberal education have more meaning?

The matter of identifying the basic important ideas is of itself a most difficult task to be sure. We could not expect to find agreement on all ideas that are basic, but certainly there can be agreement on the need for common acquaintance with ideas seriously claimed to be basic—ideas which have contributed in varying degree to the formation of our culture, ideas which any thinking person will encounter and struggle with at some time in his life.

On some of these ideas we would readily agree. For example, we could I am sure agree at once that every student in the process of acquiring a liberal education should gain an understanding of such fundamental ideas as freedom or liberty, justice, evolution, democracy, relativity, truth, induction, dignity and worth of the individual. The list could easily be extended. These ideas cut across many fields of subject matter if a full understanding is to be gained.

This approach requires a reorientation and a reorganization of knowledge. It would be a challenge to our best minds. We have reached the point when the range of knowledge and understanding is so extensive, it is no longer possible to deal with all of it. The reorganization is essential if the scope of a liberal education is to be comprehensible and if the impact is to be definite and retainable.

Furthermore, in addition to centering a program of liberal education on ideas, we need to make a new approach to the development of the ideas so that we can deal with them at different levels of maturity. We have done this in the past with organized subject matter. We teach some American history at the elementary school level, we teach it again in high school and again in college. Only in the upper levels do we get into the really controversial matters because we assume a degree of maturity is important in a concern with controversy.

In discussing ideas within the subject matter framework as we do at present, we tend repeatedly to reiterate the elementary concepts without fully developing the complexity of the idea. For example, without having made an analysis of the levels at which we now deal with the idea of freedom, I would judge that we cover the elementary phases over and over again without really hitting the controversial levels except, perhaps, in courses on political science where we are concerned with free-

dom in the state and government without being concerned with its meaning and importance in the sciences, in literature, in the arts and in our economic life. Freedom of enterprise has been as important to the development of our industrial leadership as free enterprise in ideas has been to our intellectual life.

If the common core of our programs of general or liberal education were centered upon the major ideas important in a developing civilization and with full recognition of degrees of maturity in thinking about these ideas, our programs would become more meaningful.

Obviously the ideas would not encompass all of liberal education. There would still be the need to teach communication skills and languages, mathematics and laboratory work. These would be regarded as the methods, the preparation, the skills necessary to extend a liberal education beyond the limits acquired in college.

Nor would I propose the organization of the curriculum in terms of the development of ideas to the exclusion of a field of specialization. The combination should increase the effectiveness of both types of study. In my judgment liberal education devoted to the examination of major ideas basic to modern society precedes specialized study, and at least two full years should be devoted to such study with its accompanying tool subjects.

Unlike the vast array of knowledge these basic ideas are not so numerous as to defy organization for a liberal arts program. Unlike,

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too, the vast scope of knowledge, the important ideas give us a foundation on which we can build ever more clearly the future of our civilization.

Our institutions of higher learning must cease their public relations effort to please all patrons, and must resist the demands made for every type of course. Colleges must assume intellectual leadership and the responsibility to offer the best program of higher learning within their powers and imagination. They must reassess their efforts to unify the curriculum merely by reorganizing facts or by requiring the student to encounter so many hours of each subject. They must set their sights on the goal—which certainly must be the understanding of our cultural heritage as the preparation for a liberally educated man.

Simply stated my proposal is (1) that the common core of the liberal arts be organized around the major ideas important in the development of civilization and (2) that those ideas be developed from the elementary levels on which general agreement can readily be obtained to the highest levels of maturity in thinking at which controversy is bound to exist. Such a program should produce college graduates who are better able to think about man's major contributions and therefore better able to make judgments in all aspects of living.

Alvin C. Eurich
The Fund for the Advancement of Education

STRAWS IN THE WIND (Continued From Page 1)

a first report on the Lehigh Symposium.

3. See the following excerpt from executive secretary's remarks at Oldsmobile Division of General Motors, Lansing, June 25, 1954.

Scylla and Charybdis

The day after our CEAI meeting in the Johnny Victor Theatre of the RCA Exhibition Hall (Sept. 1952), I had luncheon with the chairman, James McLane Tompkins, of C. V. Starr & Company, to get squared away on what to do next. At the end, Tommy said that, in any beginning enterprise, some one had to be the goat; and that, for this one, I was it. I replied I didn't mind being the goat so long as, in the long run, our efforts would prove justified.

I said I didn't mind putting in the effort, giving up time for family, recreation, scholarship, leisure, and exposing myself to the charge of being a wild-eyed fanatic and compulsive—a victim of a fixed idea—so long as I had the assurance of men of sound judg-

To a Younger Poet
Babel's a-building,
Bard, come sing—
Toss a poem
In the ring!
Keep it secret,
All good myth is;
Don't reveal
What the pith is.
Get it published
Then anthologized
Explicated and
Depth-analyzed
English-major-ed-in
Apotheosized.
Clam up, poet!
You shall see
Ph. D
Progeny!

George McFadden
Duquesne University

ment that it was worthwhile.

Then I put this question: "Is this CEA Institute a pillar of fire or a will o' the wisp?"

It's a pillar of fire, came the reply. But, the speaker went on, in following it toward the promised land, you must watch out for two things. You have to steer a course between a Scylla and a Charybdis. The Scylla is excessive optimism: expecting quick results in terms of rapidly increased job openings for liberal arts graduates. The Charybdis is drawing false conclusions from only a few samples. Because a few business leaders have been again speaking up for the liberal arts man for the executive career—this does not necessarily represent a dominant or even a decisive tendency. You must have your CEA members and other liberal arts people be very patient. We are working for results that will come, if at all, not in months, or even a year or two, but, at the least, in a decade.

A Pillar of Fire

We haven't begun to reach the decade mark; but already we can report progress. With the continued cooperation of those already committed to the CEAI idea, with the added cooperation and the support of some of those here for the first time, we will continue to make progress toward our goal: the maximum cooperation, within the limits of their own autonomy and integrity, between American higher education, labor and management, for the advancement of liberal education in the humanities and other arts and sciences, as an agent of the values we consider essential to civilized life, and as contributions toward that American cultural self-fulfillment which of late has been the preoccupation of Mr. J. R. Cominsky and the staff and contributors of *The Saturday Review*.

M. H. G.

We Need Orientation

The CEA Institute symposium at Lehigh University emphasized several problems which teachers of the liberal arts are perhaps not fully aware of. Few of us would deny that a great many students in liberal arts fields will enter some phase of business or industrial life upon graduation. This, we feel, is as it should be; and, though we like to see our majors take their vows to poverty and become scholars, we acknowledge that the main purpose of the liberal arts curriculum is not to prepare scholars but to prepare well-rounded men who will succeed in life. We usually also grudgingly admit that the yardstick of success will be the dollar sign.

But this frequently seems to be as far as we are willing to go. Some of our brighter students are turned down after applying for jobs, or fail to make the impression we expect them to make at job interviews because of their vague objectives in life, or because of total ignorance of the nature of the work they have chosen. Immediately, many of us berate the business firms as being represented by bores and Philistines bent upon hiring only technically trained automatons who have no concept whatsoever of present-day man's intellectual and aesthetic heritage.

There is no doubt occasionally some justification for this attitude. But, on the whole, what was stated effectively, if somewhat acidly, at the symposium by Mr. John P. Tolbert of the Socony-Vacuum Company is true. It is difficult for an interviewer to look favorably upon an applicant who knows nothing about and is seemingly uninterested in learning anything about the firm interviewing him.

Far from being Philistines, many business leaders are convinced that the person who has had a healthy smattering of Augustine, Chaucer, and Kant will ultimately make a better executive than an individual without a liberal background. Many feel that such preparation is invaluable to a man who will one day have to make important decisions. But they feel their hands are tied when the applicant takes a "Well, one job's as good as another" attitude, or when the man's selection of the line of work concerned might have been drawn from a confusion of names in a hat. To the question, "Would you be interested in production or administration?" the response "Huh?" does not prove ingratiating.

The Burden of Responsibility:
On Us

The burden of responsibility

here falls on us. We must give the liberal arts student the type of orientation he needs whether we weave it into our discussion of Book IX of *Paradise Lost* or give him the facts in personal conferences. But we often find ourselves as ignorant in this area as many of our students, if not more so. We might be able to help the student settle on some line of work which dovetails with his chief academic interests, but can we do anything beyond that? We frequently do not ourselves know the very things an interviewer expects a serious job applicant to have at his finger tips. Sometimes these things involve nothing more than the application of common sense to the nature and potential problems of the field chosen. In many cases, however, something more than common sense is needed. Certainly the technically trained applicants know what they're about during interviews. It's up to us in some way to provide our students with the basic information they must have to enter competition for positions.

But Not Altogether

Industry has been aware of our ignorance for some time, but, perhaps as part of the cold war long in existence between the commercial world and the universities, the big corporations have made little attempt to acquaint us with their needs and requirements. That's one reason why the CEA Institute is so useful and profitable to everyone concerned. The Lehigh symposium was informed of the work of The Foundation for Economic Education and the National Association of Manufacturers in trying to familiarize university personnel with the organization of typical business and industrial concerns.

Following the lead of something already in existence for professors in technical fields, these organizations are endeavoring to persuade large corporations to offer fellowships whereby liberal arts men might spend periods up to six weeks learning first-hand the workings of a large company.

What We Can Do

This sort of thing will be very helpful, but in all likelihood will exist only on a small scale for some time to come. In the meantime, we can invite representatives of business and industry onto our campuses to talk to us and to groups of liberal arts students about their place in industry. If the tenor of the symposium is indicative of anything, it is that there are innumerable businessmen who would be glad to come to the campuses for such a purpose. The NAM Education Division has a nationwide and regional list of

persons who would be available.

In the past, there might have been reason for some of us to doubt the sincerity of an industry man talking to a group of English or Philosophy majors. But industry now realizes it needs the liberally educated man, and the colleges are recognizing the futility of maintaining a head-in-the-sand policy. They are laying the groundwork for steadily increasing the number of well-rounded men in the nation's great corporations. We are the ones who need orientation on this subject, because we're the ones who must prepare our majors to answer successfully what will be asked of them as they seek employment.

L. M. Manheim
University of Delaware

ANNUAL DUES — 1955

This time we tried an experiment. We enclosed return envelopes, marked "For 1955 Dues", with our notice of the 1954 Annual Meeting. The response has been gratifying. We began to get returns almost by return mail.

Our thanks to you if you already have sent in your 1955 dues.

If you have not received a 1955 dues return envelope, please let us know, and we will send you one.

Calif. CEA Fall Meeting

The meeting was well attended, about 75 or 80 I should say. The panel presented an excellent summary of the key ideas contained in the "Selected List of Writings of Interest to Teachers of College English." Prof. Cooper commented particularly on the review of the 1953 Institute in *The Saturday Review*. Prof. Proctor summarized the 1954 Institute, pointing out that real problems were being faced and that differences of opinion were neither minimized nor exaggerated. Prof. Stryker included in his comments some remarks about the bulletins on career opportunities for English majors which have been issued by Brooklyn College and Indiana University.

In the discussion that followed Prof. Bromberger and Mr. Gillespie stressed the importance of technical writing in today's industrial and business activities.

In the luncheon address Prof. Stewart traced the development of the American Literature Section of the PAPC from its inauguration 20 years ago by four members to its present position as one of the major sections of the PAPC. He made some suggestions for the future presentation of American Literature courses in relation to

1954 ELECTIONS

After the report of the tellers on the results of the mail balloting on the slate of officers presented by the 1954 Nominations Committee, the Annual Meeting of The CEA elected this slate to office. It is as follows:

President: Katherine Koller, University of Rochester
Vice President: Bruce Dearing, Swarthmore College
Norman Holmes Pearson, Yale University
Directors to 1956: Levette J. Davidson, University of Denver
George F. Horner, University of North Carolina
Lionel Stevenson, University of Southern Calif.
Directors to 1957: Ernest Earnest, Temple University
Carl A. Lefevre, Pace College
Donald L. Lloyd, Wayne University
William L. Werner, Pennsylvania State Univ.

The following were members of the 1954 Nominating Committee:
James Barrs, Northeastern University, chairman
Clyde Henson, Michigan State College
Patrick Hogan, Delta State Teachers' College

On some of the ballots, votes were given to nominees replacing those offered by the 1954 Nominating Committee. In each case, the write-in vote has been acknowledged in a letter to the member casting the vote; and the name of the write-in nominee has been turned over to the chairman of the 1955 Nominating Committee.

1955 Nominations Suggestions Welcomed

The Chairman of the 1955 Nominating Committee, Prof. Alan MacLaine, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, invites suggestions for nominations to be presented in the 1955 national CEA elections. The request for a dual-choice slate has already been reported to Prof. MacLaine.

English courses. Prof. Stewart was introduced by Prof. McDerry, Univ. of Southern Cal., chairman of the American Literature Section of PAPC.

Harold F. Ryan, S. J.
Loyola University

SECEA

The English Department, 1960

The Southeastern CEA will meet February 25-26, 1955, in Atlanta, with Georgia Institute of Technology as host institution. The theme for the meeting will be *The English Department, 1960*, with emphasis on English Department plans in view of the expected increase in college enrollment.

The first evening will be devoted to registration and an informal reception. The following morning there are to be three

speakers on enrollment trends and effects: Roger P. McCutcheon of Vanderbilt, formerly a dean at Tulane, speaking for the college administrators; Paul Royalty of Ball State Teachers College, speaking for teacher-training English Department heads, and Clifford P. Lyons of the University of North Carolina, who will discuss the future as it is apt to affect university English Department administration.

After luncheon various interest groups will be considering the improvement of reading skills, the freshman research paper, critical writing in the introduction to literature, and creative writing in the college English program. Each group discussion will be initiated by a speaker who has had special success in the type of work he will discuss. At dinner in the evening a former president of NCTE, Dr. Lou La Brant, is to speak.

College English teachers in Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, and Florida are urged to attend. Dues for 1955 (\$1.50) and requests for programs should be sent to SECEA president, Sarah Herndon, Florida State University, Tallahassee, or Secretary-Treasurer, Margaret G. Trotter, Agnes Scott College, Decatur, Georgia.

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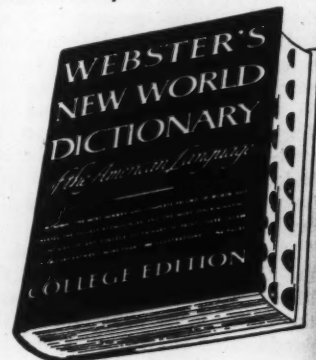
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Autrey Nell Wiley, Texas State College for Women, is Sect.-Treas. of the South-Central MLA. Margaret Lee Wiley is getting out the Texas College Conference of Teachers of English annual Proceedings.

Irving Churchill, Coe College, is going to Silliman University in the Philippines on a Fulbright appointment for 1955-1956.

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